

**Site Name: Mountmellick SAC**

**Site Code: 002141**

This site comprises a disused stretch of the Grand Canal between Dangan's Bridge and Skeagh Bridge, approximately 3 km east of Mountmellick in Co. Laois.

The site is a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) selected for the following habitats and/or species listed on Annex I / II of the E.U. Habitats Directive (\* = priority; numbers in brackets are Natura 2000 codes):

[1016] Desmoulin's Whorl Snail ( <i>Vertigo moulinsiana</i> )
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The habitat at this site is composed largely of fen-type vegetation, including Bulrush (*Typha latifolia*), Reed Sweet-grass (*Glyceria maxima*) and Yellow Iris (*Iris pseudacorus*). The area west of the bridge has been drained extensively and is now grassland.

The whorl snail *Vertigo moulinsiana* is a glacial relict with a disjunct European population that is considered Vulnerable due to loss of habitat, caused in particular by drainage of wetlands. It was first recorded at this site in 1971. The site was visited again in 1997 and the species re-found. In Ireland, the species is sparsely distributed in the central lowlands. It generally lives in calcareous wetlands, often fens. *Vertigo moulinsiana* was formerly more widespread in the canal area but has disappeared from most of its recorded sites with the dredging and reopening of canal navigation channels. Restoration of disused sections of canal without due consideration of the species is a threat.

The Mountmellick site is important as it provides useful habitat for a population of *Vertigo moulinsiana*.